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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001959

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY-IRAQ-PKK: POST-ELECTION POSSIBILITIES

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2474

- [1](#)B. ANKARA 1892
- [1](#)C. BAGHDAD 2422
- [1](#)D. BAGHDAD 2419
- [1](#)E. ANKARA 1055

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: The danger of a Turkish cross-border operation against the PKK in northern Iraq has receded slightly following the parliamentary election. Several factors will argue for Turkish caution, and key upcoming events give us opportunities to reinforce this. The danger remains of a large-scale terrorist attack blamed on the PKK that would put the government in a box. END SUMMARY.

Electoral Result

[1](#)2. (S) The ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) electoral victory offers an opening to improve dialogue between the Turks and the Iraqis. It returns to power as a single-party government with a strong mandate. Military assertions of primacy are at least temporarily muted. The AKP's strong showing in the southeast positions the party well to push for reconciliation. Having 22 Kurdish nationalist deputies in parliament, the Democratic Society Party (DTP) figures who won election as independents, for the first time since 1994 could allow political discourse as an alternative to violence. However, their presence may also be polarizing both to far-right National Action Party (MHP) deputies and on the Turkish airwaves.

[1](#)3. (S) The PKK remains an armed force prepared to terrorize Turkey. PKK leader Murat Karayilan made clear in a July 22 AP interview that his fighters are ready for battle if the Turks launch a CBO into northern Iraq. He reiterated Massoud Barzani's claims that the PKK is not attacking Turkey from its camps in northern Iraq, which he called "political indoctrination centers." The AP reporter noted that he saw PKK cadres in weapons training on his way to the interview.

Engagement as a Further Constraint

¶4. (S) With a cooler political atmosphere, reduced CBO threat, and a strengthened AKP government, we see several near-term opportunities to encourage engagement between Turks and Iraqis, including Iraqi Kurds.

-- Prospects look promising for an early August visit by PM Maliki to Ankara.

-- Discussions have started on holding a second Expanded Neighbors ministerial that will also bring Turks and Iraqis together soon, whether in Istanbul (as the Turks would like), elsewhere in the region, or in New York on the margins of UNGA. Any of these, but especially a meeting in Istanbul, could provide a forum for side meetings among Turks, Iraqis, and Iraqi Kurds. While we recognize Iraqis will determine the venue, Istanbul could be very useful in addressing Turkish-Iraqi relations in the period after political turmoil here has ended.

-- Iraqi State Minister Shirwan Wa'ili, counterpart to special PKK envoys Gen. Ralston and Turkish MFA Deputy U/S Akgunay, has recently proposed a trilateral meeting on the PKK. Barzani's letter to President Bush also refers to dialogue (ref A).

-- Press reports, including a July 30 Robert Novak op-ed, that spin up a possible U.S. operation against the PKK. Whether true or not, Turks will regard it as a sign the U.S. really wants to be helpful.

-- Landing a UNSC seat is a top Turkish priority; the GOT

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may be more receptive to the Iraqis and the U.S. in order to enhance their negotiating position on the UNSC seat.

¶5. (S) In discussions with Ambassador July 24 and 30, Deputy U/S Akgunay agreed on the importance of engagement with the Iraqi Government. He said the GOT looks forward to Maliki's visit as well as to its continued involvement in the neighbors and expanded neighbors processes. However, he reiterated the GOT line that the Iraqis need to take steps to demonstrate clearly Iraq's intent to end the PKK's terrorist presence in northern Iraq.

¶6. (S) Asked about the Iraqis' proposal for a trilateral, Akgunay said instructions had been sent to Turkey's Baghdad Embassy. He predicted the response would be that Turkey has expectations of the Iraqis, that it sets no pre-conditions on a trilateral meeting, but that a positive atmosphere should be established to make the effort productive. Akgunay's softer line was in notable contrast to the tough stance Hayati Guven took in May (ref E).

¶7. (S) Ambassador recognized our countries' mutual frustration with the PKK issue and observed that direct talks with Iraq and the KRG authorities will eventually have to occur in order to end the PKK threat in northern Iraq. He counseled Akgunay not to close off prospects for diplomacy by setting the bar so high for initial meetings on the PKK issue that the opportunity for further discussions is scuttled.

¶8. (S) COMMENT: The post-election dynamics in Turkey create an opening we can capitalize on to build dialogue. We should encourage meetings on the margins of multilateral fora, such as the September Arab League meeting, UNGA, and the Iraq Energy working group. Turkey shares our goal of a stable, secure, unified Iraq; it is in our interest to break down the distrust between Turks and Iraqis by pressing for more engagement. END COMMENT

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